

INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS

WHAT are "intensive livestock operations"?

Intensive livestock operations focus on raising, feeding and/or breeding a large number of animals in a defined space.

Feedlots are a type of intensive livestock operation that specialize in preparing animals to be sold as meat products through a process called finishing. Feedlots purchase animals from other farms for this purpose. Feedlots in Canada are mostly beef cattle or sheep farms.

Chickens, pigs and dairy cows are also raised in intensive livestock operations.



ANIMAL WELFARE is the humane treatment of animals. Farmers are responsible for ensuring that their animals are well taken care of.



INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS BENEFIT YOU TOO!

Growing crops and raising farm animals involves an economy of scale, which means that by increasing production, the cost per unit falls.¹ By producing food as efficiently as possible, farmers can generate enough profit to stay in business. It also means that food can be grown at lower costs, which decreases prices for consumers.



WHO WORKS ON THESE LARGE FARMS?

Intensive livestock operations employ specialized staff members who make sure that every animal gets the care and attention it needs. Staff members may include veterinarians, nutrition and feed specialists, animal health specialists and people in charge of breeding.



NOT ENOUGH SPACE?

Although intensive livestock operations focus on raising animals in a generally more concentrated space, farmers know that overcrowding is detrimental to animals' health and well-being. They work with experts to ensure that the animals have easy access to feed, and have room to move around freely, lie down and socialize with other animals. There is ongoing research into how we can optimize an animal's environment to continually improve animal welfare.



HOW ARE ANIMALS IN INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS HOUSED?

It depends on the needs of the particular species of animal.

Chickens, pigs and dairy cows are generally kept indoors to protect them from hot/cold weather, diseases, and predators such as coyotes and wolves. It is also easier to ensure that each animal gets the right food, clean water and proper general care when it is kept in a barn rather than outdoors.

Beef cattle are able to tolerate a wide range of temperatures, so they are housed outdoors in pens or in pastures with protection from the wind. During the winter, the animals are treated to bedding packs made up of straw and manure. As bedding packs ferment, they give off heat, warming cattle when it is cold. Farmers ensure that their beef cattle always have access to fresh water and increased feed to meet their energy requirements when it is cold outside.



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CATTLE HOSPITALS!

Beef feedlots have "hospitals" that are special facilities set up for treating ill or injured animals. These facilities provide quiet environments in which animals can recuperate.



HOW ARE INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS CONTROLLED?

It depends on the province. In Saskatchewan, for example, intensive livestock operations are regulated by *The Agricultural Operations Act*² which abides by federal and provincial laws related to animal welfare. Farmers also follow national standards for animal care and handling called **codes of practice**.⁴

Intensive livestock operations must have adequate manure storage and management plans that safeguard water resources in the area. Legislation also addresses nuisance issues such as noise, dust, odour and flies.³

ARE FEEDLOT ANIMALS EVER FORCE FED?

NO! In order to produce high quality meat, animals are fed diets specially designed by animal nutrition experts. Over-feeding an animal can result in health problems and feed wastage.



MANY CONSIDERATIONS INFLUENCE THE LOCATION:

- Fresh drinking water must be available for animals.
- Good roads must be located nearby so that staff members can travel and animals can be transported easily.
- The site should protect water resources (ponds, streams, etc.) from manure run-off.

In Canada, local or municipal governments usually control land use and location choice of an intensive livestock operation.

